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Citizen Action, Progressive Leaders of Tomorrow hold March for Racial Justice in Downtown Binghamton



Event features BU alumna Aviva Friedman, highlights racism and inequality

By CHRISTINE DEROSA - OCTOBER 15, 2018

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While many Binghamton University students headed home for fall break, some filled the streets of Downtown Binghamton for the second annual March for Racial Justice on Saturday.

The march, organized by Citizen Action and Progressive Leaders of Tomorrow (PLOT), began at the Broome County Courthouse on Court Street before the group of approximately 50 people marched to the Martin Luther King Jr. Promenade.

The group, including a handful of Binghamton students, filled the streets while chanting, “Whose streets? Our streets,” “Black Lives Matter” and “No justice, no peace.”

Rachel Slotnick, a member of the College Progressives and a sophomore majoring in music, said she decided to participate in the march after reading up on events in the community. The Binghamton Police Department (BPD), along with other community officials, has come under fire recently for violence against people of color.

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Incidents involving the police were highlighted at the event, including an altercation with two young black teenagers at a Binghamton park in August 2018, in which BPD officers placed a 13-year-old female in handcuffs on suspicion of spray-painting a nearby area. During that incident, a 14-year-old boy with developmental disabilities was also handcuffed and placed into a police van, where he repeatedly banged his head, injuring himself while in police custody. In September, the YWCA issued a formal complaint to BPD regarding its “excessive use of force” on a black woman during a domestic incident. Later that month, school staff at Binghamton High School allegedly verbally assaulted a black teenager after he left school early.

Belinda Ellison, a YWCA staff member, attended the event and said she was marching to raise awareness about racism.

“I’m here to stand up for racial justice and inequality,” Ellison said. “The YWCA’s mission is to eliminate racism and inequality, and promote justice for

all.”



Sidney Slon/Staff Photographer

Community members and students donned signs for the March for Racial Justice in Downtown Binghamton.

Jaedyn Lalonde, a member of BU's Frances Beal Society and a senior double-majoring in biology and environmental studies, said she felt being involved in the march was important because it helped bring issues to the forefront.

“In the past three months, there's been so much police brutality in the Binghamton area,” Lalonde said. “It's important to do things like this. By doing this, you're doing something.”

According to PLOT, the theme behind this year's march was “Black women lead.” The theme was chosen to

illustrate the importance of women of color and protest their marginalization by placing their voices first in the march.

The march featured various speakers, including Aviva Friedman, '14, who is also a member of PLOT and Citizen Action.

Friedman introduced herself to the crowd as their “token white friend” for the afternoon and discussed the importance of recognizing racism within oneself.

“It’s not our fault that we were raised in a racist society, surrounded by institutions whose gears are fueled by notions of white superiority,” Friedman said. “It’s not our fault that we were shaped and molded by people unaware of their biases. But it is absolutely our fault if we do not work to dismantle that.”

Friedman also said white people should take up less social space and challenged attendees to do some introspection.

“Interrupt yourself before you interrupt a person of color,” Friedman said. “Call

yourself out when you think something racist or racially biased. The next time someone mentions their doctor, professor, lawyer, catch yourself automatically picturing a white man.”



Sidney Slon/Staff Photographer

BPD was present during the protest, with vehicles both in front and in back of the crowd. Auxiliary officers were also along the route, keeping traffic from the marchers. During the protest, a

member of PLOT mentioned the police presence to the crowd and said the group specifically asked BPD to not be present. A post shared on the event's Facebook page after the event condemned the police presence at the march.

"PLOT would also like to remind attendees that Binghamton Police were not welcome at today's event, and their forced 'escort' was an intimidation tactic," the post read. "We continue to reject BPD's authority and presence, and remain committed to empowering communities despite their rampant and racist over-policing and abuses of power."

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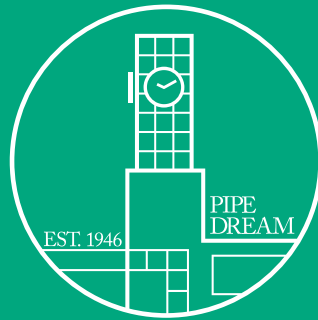
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